

24 more die as cold wave turns severe

Mercury dips to 5 degree Celsius in three north districts

STAR REPORT

The cold wave blowing across most part of the country killed at least 24 people in 24 hours till 6:00pm yesterday, raising the last three days' death toll to 41, most of whom are from worst-hit northern region.

The current spell of mild cold wave with thick envelop of fog that has already paralysed the normal life might continue for two more days, the met office said.

At least 10 people have died in cold wave in Thakurgaon,

Nilphamari and Sherpur districts where the mercury dips to 5 degree Celsius at night, reports UNB. Scores of people suffering from viral fever, asthma, cough, diarrhoea and fever have reported to the sadar hospitals and health complexes in upazilas.

Our Dinajpur correspondent reports: In Panchagarh at least eight people including children died being infecting with cold related viral diseases during the last 24 hours, Panchagarh Sadar Hospital sources said.

Four people died due to acute

cold in the district, our Gaibandha correspondent reports. No ferry-boats plied from seven local terminals along the Brahmaputra basin in Gaibandha. The district relief and rehabilitation department sent an emergency fax message demanding supply of winter clothes.

Two people died due to severe cold and many became sick due to cold related diseases in Dakop upazila, reports our Khulna correspondent.

Civil Surgeon offices of Rangpur, Kurigram and

Lalmonirhat districts gave treatment to about 1,000 patients of cold related diseases from different upazila health complexes in three days.

Children and elderly people were the worst sufferers of the cold related diseases, Civil Surgeon of Rangpur Tamsil Uddin said.

Several district administration authorities mainly those in the northern region have sent emergency fax message demanding supply of winter cloth. Prices of second hand warm clothes have

SEE PAGE 19 COL 1

Polls sans grand alliance won't be acceptable

Says Adviser Ruhul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Adviser Ruhul Alam Chowdhury yesterday said if Awami League-led grand alliance does not take part in the January 22 election, it would not be acceptable to all.

"I think the poll would not be acceptable to anyone in the world. But the election must be held within 90 days to act in accordance with the constitution," viewed Ruhul while talking to reporters at his food ministry office.

According to the adviser, consensus between the major political parties is the best way to resolve the present political crisis.

In this regard, Ruhul gave example of the 1991 elections and said consensus among the major parties allowed the constitution to be amended after the elections.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 1



PHOTO: STAR

Amid biting cold yesterday morning, five of a family attired in warm clothes cram onto a rickshaw on a Dhaka street. The photo was taken near the TSC on Dhaka University campus.

BOAT CASE Ershad asked to surrender by Jan 17

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday asked former president and Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad to surrender within January 17 in connection with a Japanese boat purchase case.

Judge Mohammad Amirul Islam of the First Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court passed the order and set the date after scrutinising the copy of the High Court (HC) judgement delivered on December 14 last year and other relevant documents of the case.

Justice Faisal Mahmud Faizee of the single-member HC bench handed Ershad two years' imprisonment rejecting his appeal against the trial court's verdict.

Faizee in his verdict asked Ershad to surrender before the trial court without specifying any time or date.

Judge Jinnata of the trial court sentenced Ershad to three years' imprisonment on July 6, 1995. The court also fined him Tk 10,000 and in default, he will have to serve four more months in jail.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

Dr Kamal hails poll boycott decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said the grand alliance decision to boycott the January 22 parliamentary election exactly reflects the sentiment of the people who want a free and fair election.

Dr Kamal told reporters at Zia International Airport (ZIA) that the voter list was not updated in line with the Supreme Court (SC) directive and an election without a neutral caretaker government or a correct voter list is not acceptable.

Dr Kamal, also the president of Gonoforum, arrived at the ZIA at around noon yesterday after a month-long stay in Washington, DC attending an arbitration on a maritime border dispute between

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

Independent candidate threatened by BNP men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

An independent candidate in the upcoming general elections has filed a general diary (GD) with the Kotwali Police Station last night after being threatened with life allegedly by a BNP-led four-party alliance candidate.

Rafiqul Islam, the independent candidate for Mymensingh 5 (Muktagachha), was forcibly taken to Mymensingh town yesterday from his village home Moishadia by a gang of activists of AKM Mosharraf Hossain, the former state minister for energy and mineral resources and a BNP candidate in the same constituency.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 3

Khaleda asks all to ignore election boycott

STAR REPORT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said the election must be held on January 22 as per the election commission schedule regardless who participates in it or not.

She also urged all to ignore the polls boycott announcement of the grand alliance and complete the election process to avoid any constitutional crisis.

While addressing public meetings and roadside rallies during her daylong election campaign in Gazipur and Mymensingh, the BNP chief asked all to exercise their citizens' rights by participating in

the polls. She addressed rallies on Sreepur Pilot High School ground seeking votes for BNP candidate Tanvir Ahmed Siddiqui, Bhaluka Degree College ground for BNP nominee Fakhruddin Bachchu, Kazi Nazrul Islam College ground in Trishal for Dr Mahbubur Rahman Liton and Circuit House ground at Mymensingh for Delwar Hossain Khan.

Our Mymensingh and Gazipur correspondents report, thousands gathered at the rallies in processions chanting slogans. Many turned up with sheaves of paddy, portraits of Begum Zia and late president Ziaur Rahman and

colourful banners on the very first day of Khaleda Zia's election campaign.

"Awami League (AL) decided to stay away from the polls as their corrupt accomplices have been disqualified for the election," Begum Zia said urging the people to participate in the election to foil all conspiracies against the country.

Khaleda blasted Awami League for boycotting the election and observed, "People have no faith in them. They are boycotting the election because they know they could not win."

The grand alliance has turned out to be a 'great danger' for themselves

SEE PAGE 19 COL 3

Chronology of keeping off polls

The Daily Star publishes a chronological account of the political events that took place in the last two months leading to the Awami League-led alliance's latest decision to boycott the January 22 general election.

OCTOBER 28, 2006 At least 12 people were killed and about 2,000 wounded, many by bullets, as activists of BNP-led four-party alliance and Awami League-led 14-party combine clashed in an escalation of violence across the country. The political activists vandalised and set fire to offices and houses of rivals as they came out on streets with vengeful programmes a few hours after curtain fell on the coalition government.

Former Chief Justice KM Hasan decided to stay away from

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

RESISTING ELECTION

Hasina asks party men to make door to door visit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday instructed her party leaders and workers to initiate door to door campaign to make the people aware about a free and fair election to resist vote rigging and holding of a 'farical' election.

The AL-led grand electoral alliance tried its level best to participate in the elections slated for January 22 and for this they submitted nomination papers in all the constituencies, she said.

"But when we understood that a farical election is going to be held without a proper voter list, we stepped back and decided not to participate in any farical election," she added.

Voter list is the main prerequisite for holding a fair election but the caretaker government and the Election Commission are trying to hold a parliamentary election without a proper voter list, she said at a view exchange meeting with the leaders of her party's student wing Bangladesh Chhatra League

SEE PAGE 19 COL 4

SAVING LAUACHHARA

Cackle of the jungle fowl now heard louder

Wildlife makes a comeback after community's involvement in conservation

PINAKI ROY

Community participation in the conservation process of the Lauachhara forest has seen a remarkable improvement in the overall condition of the forest including an increase in wildlife. The illegal practice of tree felling is now strictly controlled in the forest.

The significant increase of wildlife indicates an improving forest health since the Nishorgo Support Project of the Forest Department started some two years back.

In addition, less human intrusion in the forest also contributed a lot in the process, people concerned with the forest told The Daily Star during

a recent visit there.

A small patch (only 1250 acre) of evergreen and semi-evergreen forest in Srimangal, Lauachhara is noted for its rich flora and fauna.

While conducting a bird census, Dr Monirul Khan of Jahangirnagar University found

SEE PAGE 19 COL 4



PHOTO: STAR

Hoolock gibbons are increasing in number in Lauachhara forest.